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Tripoli: he was afterwards restored to freedom, and sent by me to his country and friends. Jaffer, King of Wadey, was a slave in Tripoli. I obtained his freedom, and sent him, *viâ* Egypt, to his own country. The son of Bedlow is now Sultan of Soudan.

IV.—*Account of an Excursion in Hadramaut*, by ADOLPHE BARON WREDE. Communicated by Capt. J. B. HAINES, I.N.

As you take great interest in all that promotes the cause of science, I beg to communicate to you the brief outline of a journey—from which I have very recently returned—to the very interesting part of Arabia, which on our present maps bears the name of Hadramaut, and being that portion which separates the desert of El Akkaf from the Indian Ocean.

The endeavours of former travellers to penetrate South Arabia have always been unsuccessful from the very strong religious fanaticism which animates all the inhabitants, more especially those of the towns.

Lieut. Wellsted, in his valuable work on Arabia, suggests the propriety of subsequent travellers adopting the Mohammedan costume, the better to escape observation, which I accordingly did under the name of Abd el Hud, and in that disguise I left Aden on the 22nd of June, 1843, and sailed for Osurum; from whence I travelled by land to Makalla. Being afraid of drawing upon me the attention of those inhabitants who are acquainted with Europeans, I hurried my departure as quickly as possible, and left the latter place on the 26th of June for the interior, under the protection of a Bedouin of the powerful tribe Akäbre. The celebrated Wadi Doän was the end of my first journey, which I reached after a march of $8\frac{1}{2}$ days: our stages were generally very short, as we had to pass a ridge of steep hills; the actual time consumed on the road was 49 hours and 18 minutes; the general direction N.W. The first day's journey lay through a continued succession of deep and narrow dales, bounded by bare granitic mountains which elevate their serrated summits about 2000 feet above the level of the sea. A great many chalybeate springs, the heat of which indicated 100° to 130° of Fahr., rose from the sides of the mountains, the waters of which proved good and drinkable, as they contained no trace of sulphur. Although the broken ground of the dales is apparently infertile, yet a great many trees and plants are to be seen luxuriantly flourishing, and which supply sufficient food for the camels of the numerous caravans passing along this road. The traveller too enjoys the shade of the rich foliage of the lofty trees which shelter him at noon from the scorching beams of the

sun. As a perfect calm prevails in these valleys from 10 A.M. till 4 P.M., the temperature rises to the height of 150° to 160° of Fahr. The road passed through many villages, and there were others at a short distance from it. On the 4th day's journey I ascended the mountain of Sidara, which rises about 4000 feet above the level of the sea. The sides of this mountain are covered with aromatic plants: on arriving at its summit I found myself at the foot of two peaks, called Chareibe and Farjalat, which on the right and left rose perpendicularly to the height of 800 feet above my position, and being hardly 10 minutes* asunder, they looked like the colossal pillars of a gigantic gate. Iron-sandstone now appears to cover the before-mentioned granite. The thermometer had fallen, and, after the fatiguing march of the day, the night was sensibly cold. The following day I ascended some terrace-like ridges rising one above the other, the highest of which is named Gebel Drôra. From the commencement of this day's journey I observed the iron-sandstone to be overlaid by a sandstone having a fine granular texture, yellow in colour and very hard. I was now about 8000 feet above the level of the sea, and my view from W. to N.E. ranged over a yellowish plain of immense extent, on which rose every here and there conical hills and ridges. In the E. the summit of the colossal Kar Seban towered beyond the plain. Towards the S. is seen a labyrinth of dark granitic cones, and the view is lost in the misty atmosphere of the ocean. From this point the road continues to follow the level ground, while on the right and left many Wadis meander through the plain in narrow defiles, conveying the rain-water to the lower regions.

At the point where these defiles commence the traveller meets with a few stunted accacias, which afford a little shelter and scanty food to the camels. Every 6 or 9 miles there are cisterns, but neither bush nor village interrupts the monotony of this immense plain. The temperature on this elevated plateau was very agreeable in the day-time, the thermometer never rising above 80° Fahr.; but the nights were intensely cold, the thermometer sinking to 50°. The sudden appearance of the Wadi Doân took me by surprise and impressed me much with the grandeur of the scene. The ravine, 500 feet wide and 600 feet in depth, is enclosed between perpendicular rocks, the debris of which form in one part a slope reaching to half their height. On this slope towns and villages rise contiguously in the form of an amphitheatre; while below the date-grounds, covered with a forest of trees, the river, about 20 feet broad, and enclosed by

* The Baron gives all his distances in time, by which we are probably to understand the time required to walk over them.—ED.

high and walled embankments, is seen first winding through fields laid out in terraces, then pursuing its course in the open plain, irrigated by small canals branching from it. From the description you will, I trust, form a correct idea of the Wadi Doân, of the extent, situation, and character of which travellers have given such contradictory statements.

My first view of the valley disclosed to me four towns and four villages within the space of an hour's distance. The road that leads down into the Wadi is a very dangerous one, particularly in its upper part; on the right, in some places, are precipices from 300 to 400 feet in depth, whilst a rocky wall on the left nearly stops up the road, leaving it scarcely 4 feet in breadth; and to add to the difficulty it is paved with pebblestones, which, having been constantly trodden by men and animals, have become as smooth as a looking-glass. No kind of parapet or railing whatever has been constructed to prevent accidents.

At Choreibe, one of the towns of the Wadi, I was received with all possible hospitality by Sheikh Abdalla-Ba-Sudan, a man celebrated for the influence he has in the country, and for the reputation of sanctity he has attained. From Choreibe I directed my course towards the S.W. to copy the inscriptions subsisting in the Wadis Uebbene and Maifaah. I was not permitted to visit Nakab el Hadjar, Eisan, and Habalen; I however discovered in the Wadi Uebbene, an himiaritic inscription on a wall which encloses, as it were, the valley. About 6 English miles distant from Nakab el Hadjar I was stopped by a band of Bedouins who forced me to return to Wadi Doân. The country of Habahn was in open insurrection, as the former sultan, Achmed-ibn-Abd-el-Wachet, had been dethroned by his nephew and imprisoned, together with his brother. On the road from Wadi Doân to Wadi Maifaah, at the distance of 5 days' journey, is the fertile Wadi Hagger, where immense forests of date-trees are watered by a continually running stream, that rises 4 days' journey N.W. from the town of Hota. One day further down this Wadi is called Giswuel, and 2 days' journey more downwards it is called Wadi Mefah, under which name it reaches the sea near the village of Bir-el-Hässi, eastward of Ras-el-Kelb. By a more northern route, passing the Wadi Reide-Eddin, I reached Choreibe in 8 days, having been 20 days absent from the town. Wadi Doân changes its name several times; it is called at Choreibe, Wadi Nebbi; from thence Wadi Doân; from Gähdun, Wadi Hajarín; from Hora, Wadi Kasr; and from Kubr el Hud, Wadi Missile, under which name it reaches the sea near Säh-Hud. After resting a few days I set out in a N.W. direction, and a 2 days' long and fatiguing journey brought me to Wadi Amt, which I followed in a northern

direction. It is equal to the above-mentioned Wadi in extent, and resembles it in form and in the proximity of its towns. From Hora, where the Wadi Amt joins the Wadi Hajarín, I again ascended the high table-land, and taking a western direction arrived in 4 days at the town of Sava in the Wadi Rachie. This Wadi is not so populous as the two before-mentioned Wadis, most part being covered with sand. It runs 8 days N. from Sava, above Terim, into the Wadi Kasr. Here I was told that the desert El-Akkaf was only a day's journey distant, and that that part which extends 8 days along its borders to Kubr el Hud, was inaccessible, and was called Bahr el Saffi; that the whole space was full of *sniḥ spots*,* in which anything which happened to fall would perish. The place derived its name from King Saffi, who starting from Bellad Sabba Wadian and Ras el Ghoul, attempted to march an army through this desert, in the midst of which his troops perished. On the following day I set out for that place, in order to convince myself of the truth of the statement which I had received. After a 6 hours' journey in a N.W. direction I reached the borders of the desert, which is about 1000 feet below the level of the high land. A melancholy scene presented itself to my astonished sight! Conceive an immense sandy plain strewed with numberless undulating hills, which gave it the appearance of a moving sea. Not a single trace of vegetation, be it ever so scanty, appears to animate the vast expanse. Not a single bird interrupts with its note the calm of death, which rests upon this tomb of the Sabæan army. I clearly perceived three spots of dazzling whiteness the position and distance of which I measured geometrically. "That is Bahr el Saffi," said my guide to me; "ghosts inhabit those precipices, and have covered with treacherous sand the treasures which are committed to their care; every one who approaches near them is carried down, therefore do not go." I of course paid no attention to their warnings, but requested to be led to those spots in accordance with the agreement I had made with my Bedouins. It took my camels full 2 hours' walk before we reached the foot of the high plateau, where we halted at sunset, in the vicinity of two enormous rocky blocks. On the following morning I summoned the Bedouins to accompany me to the places alluded to above, but they were not to be induced; and the dread of ghosts had obtained such complete mastery over them, that they scarcely ventured to speak; I was therefore determined to go alone, and taking with me a

* The subsequent context will show the nature of these spots. It appears probable, from the author's want of sufficient acquaintance with the English language, he knew of no better term than the one he has used, and which, we believe, means those accumulations of drift snow that are found in the hollows of rocky regions, and into which the unwary traveller sinks.—ED.

plummet of $\frac{1}{2}$ a kilo's weight and a cord of 60 fathoms, I started on my perilous march. In 36 minutes I reached, during a complete lull of the wind, the northern and nearest spot, which is about 30 minutes long and 26 minutes broad, and which towards the middle takes by degrees a sloping form of 6 feet in depth, probably from the action of the wind. With the greatest caution I approached the border to examine the sand, which I found almost an impalpable powder; I then threw the plumb-line as far as possible; it sank instantly, the velocity diminishing, and in 5 minutes the end of the cord had disappeared in the all-devouring tomb. I will not hazard an opinion of my own, but refer the phenomenon to the learned who may be able to explain it, and restrict myself to having related the facts.

The following day I returned to Sava, where I visited a himi-aritic tomb, which was only 15 minutes distant from the town. The fanaticism of a Sheikh had unfortunately destroyed the inscription that had formerly existed on the entrance. The next day I started on my return to Choreibe, which I reached after a 4 days' march. Having remaining four days at this hospitable place, I left it in order to visit the country of Kubr el Hud, which historically and geologically is highly interesting; two sons of my host and the celebrated Habib Abdalla ibn Haidun accompanied me. We rested the first night at Grein, a considerable town on the right bank of the Wadi Doân, and on the following day I arrived at Seef, about an hour after my companions who had preceded me.

An immense multitude of people had assembled in the town to celebrate the feast of the Sheikh Said ben Issa ibn Achmudi, who was buried in Gähdun, situated in the vicinity of Seef. As soon as I had arrived among the crowd they all at once fell upon me, dragged me from my camel, and disarmed me; using me very roughly, they tied my hands behind my back and carried me, with my face covered with blood and dust, before the reigning Sultan Mohammed Abdalla ibn ben Issa Achmudi. The whole of my captors raised a horrible cry and declared me to be an English spy exploring the country, and demanded my instantly being put to death. The Sultan being afraid of the Bedouins, on whom he, like all Sultans of the Wadi, is dependant, was about to give orders for my execution, when my guides and protectors came in haste and quieted the Bedouins' minds by means of the moral influence they had over them. In the meantime I remained confined to my room with my feet in fetters. I was imprisoned for 3 days, but provided with every necessary; on the evening of the third day my protectors came to me with the news, that they had pacified the Bedouins under the condition that I was to return to Macalla, and that I should give up all my writ-

ings. At night I concealed as many of my papers as I could, and delivered only those which were written in pencil, with which they were contented. After my notes were given up, the Sultan wished to see my luggage, from which he selected for himself whatever pleased him. The next morning I set out on my return to Macalla, which town I reached on the 8th of September, after a journey of 12 days, and thence took a boat for Aden.

V.—*Note on the Island of Hong-Kong*. By A. R. JOHNSTON.
Esq., H.M. Deputy Superintendent of Trade.

[The following account alludes to the beginning of 1843.—Ed.]

THE island of Hong-Kong, seen from a distance at sea, is, like all the islands on this coast of China, precipitous and uninviting. Its high hills often terminate in sharp peaks, and are thickly strewn with masses of black rock, of primitive formation, frequently piled upon one another in a most remarkable and sometimes fantastic manner, with here and there two or three lower hills, covered with gravel and sand. From the summit to the water's edge there are few or no trees; and, except in the months of May, June, July, and August, when these islands look green, they might be supposed to be quite barren.

On landing and examining the island of Hong-Kong, the N. and N.E. side is found to be separated from the S. and S.W. by one continued range of hills, in no place less than 500, in most parts upwards of 1000, and on more than one pinnacle 1744 feet above the level of the sea, by barometrical observation. When to this is added that the utmost breadth of the island does not exceed 4 or 5 miles, it may easily be imagined that the descent to the sea on either side is very abrupt.

The eastern end of the island is divided from the centre by two deep ravines, both running from the same eminence—the one in a S.E. direction, which terminates in Tie-tam Bay, and the other in a northerly direction, and terminating in the small valley of Wang-nie-chong. The western part of the island is likewise divided from the centre by two ravines, both running from the same eminence—the one to the S. terminating in a small undulating piece of country, on which the village of Pok-foo-lum is situated, and the other to the north, where it spreads out and forms Government Hill and the small flat beneath. Small streams run down all these ravines, and they quickly swell into torrents when rain falls; but, what is remarkable, they never fail to furnish water in the driest season of the year. There are